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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 001455

SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

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TAGS: [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [CY](#) [TU](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: NEW NATO SYG GETS MIXED REVIEWS IN GREECE

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

Summary

11. (C) Greek government and media reaction to the August 26-27 visit of new NATO Secretary General Rasmussen has been moderately negative. While Greeks were pleased to have the opportunity to brief Rasmussen on their positions on the Aegean, the new NATO strategic concept, and other issues, they believe Rasmussen was "poorly prepared" for his own remarks, repeated to the press, which gave the impression that Greek and Turkish tensions were the sole cause of difficulties in NATO-EU cooperation. In the Greeks' view, the real root of NATO-EU problems is Turkey's unwillingness to implement the Cyprus-related commitments under the Additional Ankara Protocol for Turkey's EU accession. Rasmussen's predecessor, the Greeks noted, had been much more careful in his language on this topic. Despite these concerns, Greek officials said they were in agreement with Rasmussen on many other topics, and they assessed the visit overall as "good." End Summary.

Some Missteps at the Start of the Relationship

12. (C) On August 31, Greek MFA NATO Directorate officials Theodoros Daskarolis and Andrea Kintis told us that Rasmussen's discussions with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Defense Minister had been "open, serious, and frank." Echoing analysis in the Greek press after the visit, Daskarolis and Kintis said they were "disappointed" that Rasmussen had not been "more prepared" on his first visit to discuss Greece-Turkey issues. Unlike his more careful predecessor, they said, Rasmussen had confidently expressed his intention to solve Greek-Turkish problems "including Cyprus," and had equated these problems with NATO-EU coordination difficulties. In essence, they said, he called on Greece and Turkey to resolve their differences directly with each other and added the issue of NATO-EU cooperation to the already long list of these bilateral differences. In the Greeks' view the real obstacle to better NATO-EU cooperation was not Greek-Turkish disagreements but was Turkey's policy - imported into NATO contexts - of not interacting with Cyprus. The Greeks expressed bewilderment that Rasmussen would have made what they saw as a fundamental mistake, and they said he had compounded it by drawing superficial connections between the lack of NATO-EU cooperation and dangers to operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and off the coast of Somalia.

13. (C) On other topics the discussions went much better. Rasmussen and the Greeks exchanged views on Afghanistan and the ongoing process for creating a new NATO strategic concept. They had very similar views on NATO-Russia relations, agreeing that NATO had a strategic interest in cooperation but also had principles to

which it expected its partners to adhere. They agreed that the European prospective, including NATO's open door policy, should remain available to countries in the western Balkans. On the name issue, Rasmussen confirmed to the Greeks that the Bucharest decision remained valid. Even on the broader question of Greek-Turkish relations, Daskarolis and Kintis expressed satisfaction that top Greek officials were able to spell out to Rasmussen Greek positions, especially on the Aegean where they argued that a strictly "neutral" NATO position regarding exercises was inherently difficult if not impossible to achieve, because it gave the Turks the opportunity to make additional claims that islands should be demilitarized. Asked his overall assessment, Daskarolis said that, despite Greeek disappointment over some of Rasmussen's comments, it was a "good visit."

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